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Nairobi Arboretum Centenary Stamps

This holiday season support the Arboretum by buying a special set of Kenya stamps to commemorate its centennial celebration.

The new stamps feature four Arboretum trees and their flowers - Cape Chestnut, Nandi Flame, Calabash Nutmeg and Bhutan Cypress illustrated by Ann Birnie.

Values are Ksh. 25/-, 65/-, 75/- and 95/-.
Orders can be placed with Posta or from
FONA: Tel 020 2725471 or
fona@naturekenya.org



The Library is now open!

Your are welcome to use the new and modern facility for reading & reference at the Heritage Centre.

The library is open Mon - Fri
from 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 pm

New Checklist of Birds of Kenya Photo competition

Nature Kenya's Bird Committee is updating the Checklist of the Birds of Kenya done in 1996. They are calling on all bird photographers to send a picture of a common or endemic and colorful bird for the cover. The chosen picture will be credited. You may send your image on a CD, or by email with a reduced size file of less than 500KB in JPEG format.
Competition closes 15 January 2008.

www.birdsandpeople.org

Birds and People is a website forum where anyone interested in birds and their cultural importance can discuss and place on record their experiences and observations. Many of the contributions will be used in the text of an eventual book and all contributors will be acknowledged.

Wishing you a Happy Holiday Season

Please note that the office will close on
21 December '07 and reopens
7 January '08
(Birdwalks will continue as normal)

Friends of City Park

The Executive Committee of Friends of City Park (FOCP) has been working with great vigor and commitment to save and consolidate the beautiful City Park. The committee is looking for new support to work towards the revival of the Park.

Are you interested in City Park?
Do you have time?
Do you have some experience?

You can also support the Friends by joining them. Brochure and subscription form enclosed. Please contact Chris Gitau at office@naturekenya.org

Birdwalks for students

Please note that there is now a separate Wednesday morning birdwalks for students. Each birdwalk will cost 300/-, will be led by a professional guide, with transport available on a first come first served bases. Pay on arrival.



www.chrismadden.org

DECEMBER AT A GLIMPSE

THU 6 SAMAKI OUTING & SUCCULENTA SUPPER

SAT 8 TREE WALK

SUN 16 SUNDAY BIRDWALK

BIRDWALKS EVERY WEDNESDAY MORNING
BIRD RINGING EVERY THURSDAY MORNING

Editorial Team

Editor Catherine Ngarachu
Evening Skies Fleur Ng'weno
Naturalist Dino Martins
Action Serah Munguti

In the field with Succulenta East Africa

Annual Supper Thu' 6 December 07

Julia Glen will be hosting the annual supper night and screening of "A dangerous obsession" about an orchid collector's obsession with collecting a rare species in a dangerous territory. Please call 891065 and liase regarding food, drinks and directions.

Weekend in Taita Sat 9 – Mon 11 Feb 2008

Field trip to Taita including a visit to Mount Kasigau. Accommodation will be at Sagala Lodge. Full board Kshs. 7,335 for 3 nights. For more details and bookings, please contact Brian Williams on 0733 923990 or email: bwilliams@swiftkenya.com

Ban on Shamba System and Timber harvesting in forest reserves lifted

*Paul Matiku and
Enock Kanyanya*

On 1st November 2007, while launching the Eastern Rainfall Regime Tree Planting Season, the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources announced his intentions to lift the ban on the Shamba system and on the harvesting of timber in forest reserves. The Shamba system was conceived to help the Forestry Service nurture plantation trees. This is done with the help of local farmers, who are allowed to grow crops as they nurture young plantation trees. The farmers are supposed to abandon their farms when the trees have grown.

But the timing is inappropriate: there are no proper rules and regulations to manage the timber exploitation and Shamba system; the Kenya Forest Service is not yet fully operational; and local community capacity to assist in surveillance and monitoring is either too weak or not existing. We call upon the government to ensure speedier development of clear guidelines on how to implement the Shamba system and timber harvesting to avoid the rampant destruction of indigenous forests that necessitated the ban.

It is also important that the Minister explains to Kenyans that the Shamba system is only allowed for areas that are under plantations: and while the system helps local communities produce food, the main objective is speedier reforestation to ensure a continued supply of timber. The Minister should also clarify that harvesting of timber is only for plantations, not indigenous forests.

Nature Kenya is concerned that without clear guidelines, regulations, schedules and appropriate government and local community capacity to manage the lifting of the ban, Kenya's indigenous forests will be seriously affected. Nature Kenya is calling for speedier operationalisation of the Kenya Forest Service (KFS).

Applause for Uganda's decision to drop Mabira Forest give-away

Conservationists across the BirdLife Partnership welcomed news that the Ugandan government has dropped its plan to give away a third of Mabira Forest Reserve to provide land for sugarcane plantations.

Mabira Forest Reserve (at over 30,000 hectares) is globally recognized by BirdLife as an Important Bird Area (IBA). The forest contains over 12% of plant species and 30% of bird species found in Uganda. The announcement follows months of intensive campaigning by a number of organizations, most notably Nature Uganda (the East Africa Natural History Society and BirdLife in Uganda).

Nature Uganda's recent economic valuation of Mabira Forest Reserve is thought to have played an enormous part in the decision. The report showed clearly that the economic value of the forest if conserved would surpass the anticipated economic value from sugarcane growing in future.

Achilles Byaruhanga, Nature Uganda's Executive Officer, expressed delight: "I am excited that our effort to advocate for a better option for Mabira Forest Reserve has been recognized and the fact accepted that the forest is a critical resource for Uganda and globally".

www.birdlife.org/news/news/2007/10/mabira.html

Think pink save Flamingos

A temporary reprieve has been given to the one million lesser flamingos of Tanzania's Lake Natron, threatened by a huge industrial development on their most important breeding site in the world. Tanzania's Lake Natron is the only East African site where the Lesser Flamingo nests successfully. Three quarters of the world's population of this enigmatic bird breed there because food is plentiful, nesting sites abound and because the lake exists in almost total isolation, free from outside disturbance.

The developers, Lake Natron Resources, have been ordered to produce a new and better environmental statement and consider other sites for soda ash extraction. The firm is jointly owned by the Indian company TaTa Chemicals and the Tanzanian Government.

Dr Mike Rands, Chief Executive of BirdLife International, said: "The proposal to develop Lake Natron for soda ash extraction is misguided and the decision today is a victory for conservation and for common sense. The flamingos are not safe yet. The developers should choose another location for extracting soda ash and abandon their plans for Lake Natron.

Conservation groups and agencies, and the EU, representing donors, said the development should be rejected because of the risk of driving away the flamingos, harming other species and irreversibly damaging Lake Natron, which is protected by international law. Lota Melamari, Chief Executive of the Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania said that the survival of the Lesser Flamingo must not be jeopardised.



Black and White Casqued Hornbills by Dino Martins

Donate

Remember Nature Kenya in your long term planning or in your will and help sites and species for generations to come.

natural history

The Evening Sky Dec 07 & Jan 08

Ian Mackay and Fleur Ng'weno

Comet 17P/Holmes

Comet 17P/Holmes could be seen with the naked eye on clear dark nights in early November. Viewing was best after 8 pm, however. With the naked eye it seemed like a hazy star. Through ordinary binoculars it looked like round ball, larger, duller and fuzzier than a star.

Now, in late November, the comet is fading, and we do not know if it will be visible in December. Nevertheless, here are the directions for finding it:

In the evening, look for the cluster of several bright stars close together, the Pleiades, in the eastern sky. Then look left, to the north, for the zigzag shape of the constellation Cassiopeia. Halfway between the Pleiades and Cassiopeia, look a little lower in the sky. You will see the stars of the constellation Perseus. In November 2007, Comet 17P/Holmes was moving slowly across the stars of Perseus.

Comets are part of our solar system, much nearer than the stars. They reflect light from the sun, like the planets. Comets, however, have long orbits that take them far from the sun, where we cannot see them, and then close to the sun. Comets are composed mainly of ice and dust. When they approach the sun, some of the ice melts, forming a streaming tail. Comet 17P/Holmes amazed sky-watchers by suddenly becoming much brighter, while it was still far from the sun.

Moon, December 2007

1 December - last quarter; 9 December - new moon; 17 December - first quarter; 24 December - full moon; 31 December - last quarter

Sun

December 22 is the Solstice - the shortest day in the Northern hemisphere, the longest day in the South. Here on the equator, it is hardly noticeable.

Planets, December 2007

Bright Jupiter has been sinking rapidly in the west. In the second week of December it disappears into the sunset. Meanwhile, the reddish planet Mars rises in the east, and can be seen all night. Mars is just south of the moon on 24 December.

In the morning before dawn, Venus is very bright, high in the eastern sky. Saturn is almost overhead.

In the middle of December, look in the night sky for possible meteors or "shooting stars", as the Earth passes through an area of space with dust.

December-January Stars

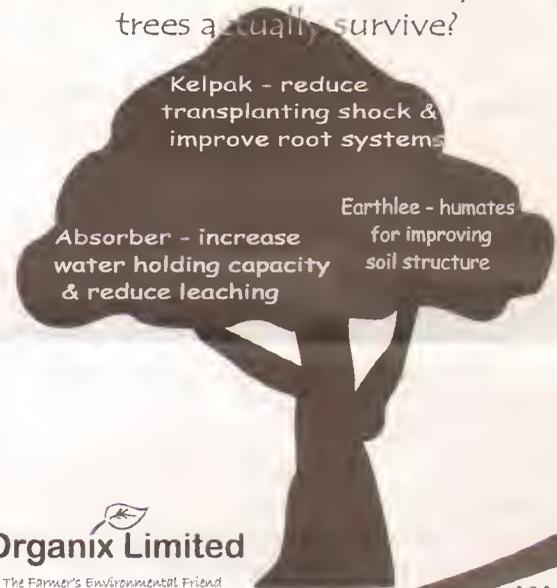
Evening skies in December and January are full of bright stars. Bright Achernar is in the southwest, and bright Capella in the northeast. The Pleiades or seven sisters, close together, rise in the east. Near the Pleiades is another cluster of stars, the Hyades, shaped like a letter V. The red star Aldebaran tips one fork of the V.

The constellation of Orion, the hunter or warrior, rises directly east. Look for three bright stars in a row, Orion's belt. Two bright stars, one of them bluish-green, represent Orion's knees. Two other bright stars, one orange in colour, are Orion's shoulders. A sword of three faint stars in a row seems to hang from his belt. With binoculars, you can see the great nebula M42, a hazy glowing spot in the sword.

EARTHLEE  ABSORBER

Survival

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GREAT FACILITIES & GREAT DISCOUNTS FOR MEMBERS!

KINANGOP GUEST HOUSE

Perched on the Kinangop Plateau with incredible views across the Rift Valley, the farm combines tussock-grass pasture, indigenous forest, and attractive gardens. The guesthouse is comfortable and fully furnished. Visitors can enjoy hikes and walks on the farm or go further afield with local guides.

For more information, brochure and non-member rates please contact Nature Kenya. Guest House rates: Day visit 350/-

| MEMBER nos | Overnight | Weekend |
|------------|-----------|---------|
| 1 to 2 pax | 4000/- | 6500/- |
| 3 pax | 4,900/- | 7,400/- |
| 4 pax | 5,800/- | 8,300/- |

20% OFF ACCOMMODATION AT THE DRIFTWOOD

On presentation of your membership card, you can get this discount off accommodation (if paying by cash or cheque) at the Driftwood Beachclub. This is a charming beachfront property with great food and service. Contact: gm@driftwoodclub.com or tel 042 20155

BIRDWALKS

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIRDWALKS

Bird watching walks at sites in and around Nairobi. Meet at the National Museum car park near Langi Langi cafe, every Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. Return about 12:30 p.m. Those who are not members can get temporary membership at Ksh 100 per birdwalk, payable on arrival at the car park.

SUNDAY BIRDWATCH

Members meet at the National Museum, Nairobi car park near Langi Langi cafe at 9:00 a.m. the third Sunday of every month, i.e. 16 Dec. '07 and 20 Jan '08. The members decide where to go. Bring lunch

KINANGOP BIRDING

Friends of Kinangop Plateau organise birdwalks every third Friday of the month i.e. 21 Dec. '07 at 9:00 a.m around Magumu and Njambini areas. To participate contact Bakari Ng'ang'a on 0721 470215

FFJ BIRDWALK (Coast)

Friends of Fort Jesus birdwalks are held the third Saturday of each month, i.e. 15 Dec. '07 and 19 Jan '08. Please call Marlene Reid on 2491648 or 0720 949195 to confirm

TREE WALKS

Guided tree walks in the Arboretum on the second Saturday and i.e. 8 Dec '07 from 9:30 a.m. Meet at the Arboretum gate. Those who are not members of FONA or Nature Kenya pay Ksh 100/- fee on arrival at the gate.

BIRD RINGING

Meet at the Museums' Nairobi Botanic Garden, at 7:00 a.m. every Thursday. Confirm with NMK Ornithology Section.

ARABUKO-SOKOKE (Coast)

The Saturday birdwatch with the Arabuko Sokoke Forest Guides Association. Confirm with the Visitor Centre, Gede. Cost 100/- per person. KWS fees now apply (100/- Citizens, 500/- Residents)

LAKE VICTORIA SUNSET BIRDERS (Kisumu)

The Lake Victoria Sunset Birders organise bird walks at sites in and around Kisumu every Friday of the month. For further details call 057 42952 or 0734 994938 or email lakevictoriasunsetbirders@yahoo.co.uk

MT KENYA BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION GROUP (MKBCG)

The MKBCG organise bird walks to sites around Naro Moru every last Saturday of the month i.e. 29 Dec. '07.

For more information contact 0722 364904, 0733 937115 or 062 62071 Email: mt_kebio@yahoo.co.uk

MARURA NAROK BIRDWATCHERS

A community group near Uaso Narok Swamp, Rumuruti, which organises birdwalks every last Saturday i.e. 29 Dec. '07. Call 062 32718 or email olmaisor@africaonline.co.ke

NGONG ROAD FOREST WALKS

Ngong Road Forest Sanctuary Trust nature walks held the first and third Saturdays of the month i.e. 1 & 15 Dec '07, at 9:00 a.m. Meet at the stairs leading to the Restaurant at the Racecourse. Call Simon to confirm on 3875207 or 0729840715.

SAMAKI DAYS

Guided fish excursions on the first Thursday, i.e. 6 Dec '07 from 9:00 a.m - 12:30 p.m. Meet at the Nairobi Museum car park. Pay Ksh 50/- per person on arrival. Confirm with NMK Ichthyology Section.

Yes! Start my Nature Kenya membership

Surname _____
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